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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 006574

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [JO](#) [IQ](#)

SUBJECT: FOUR JORDANIAN HOSTAGES FREED IN IRAQ

REF: A. AMMAN 6456

[1](#)B. AMMAN 6370

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) Four Jordanian citizens kidnapped in Iraq last week have been freed as a result of the intervention of Iraqi tribal leaders and the Muslim Ulema Committee in Fallujah, according to MFA official Ali al-Ayed. Press reports indicate that Iraqi Shaykh Haj Ibrahim Jassam learned on August 3 that four kidnapped Jordanians were being held in a house in Fallujah, and he then organized a raid to free them. Once the raid began on August 4, according to the shaykh, the kidnappers fled the house and the hostages were brought to his home unharmed. Al-Ayed told reporters that no concessions had been made to the kidnappers, describing them as "bandits." The fate of two truck drivers kidnapped on July 26 remains unknown. The circumstances surrounding a missing businessman from Ramtha -- reported earlier this week as a seventh hostage -- remained unclear.

[1](#)2. (U) Perhaps in response to some public criticism the GOJ was not doing enough to secure the release of the hostages (on August 2 the families of two of the hostages had gone to the Royal Court demanding GOJ action for their release), MFA officials had scheduled a press conference on August 4 to announce the hostage release. However, it was canceled after the men's arrival in Jordan was delayed. The men were first transported to the Jordanian field hospital in Fallujah Iraq for a medical checkup. MFA official Ashraf Zeitoun told PolOff on August 5 that the men were en route to Jordan to be reunited with their families.

[1](#)3. (C) Observers note that animosity towards Jordan among some Iraqis (and foreign militants holed up in Iraq) almost certainly has played a role in the kidnappers' targeting decisions, noting that Syrian truckers, for example, have not (yet) met the same fate as their Jordanian counterparts. Unsurprisingly, the kidnappings have had a deleterious effect on Jordanian truckers' willingness to make trip, fearing for their safety. Unconfirmed press reports indicate that some Jordanian truckers have been forced to sign papers relieving their company of responsibility for their safety once in Iraq. Contacts tell us Iraqi truckers are picking up the slack.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: The release of the four Jordanians will help lower the volume of criticism directed at the GOJ for its handling of the hostage crisis, although the GOJ's role in the latest turn of events, if any, remains unclear. Post will attempt to verify the GOJ's public claim that it did not make any concessions to the kidnappers. Regardless, its failure to take a strong public stand against the terrorists after the first two hostages were taken probably encouraged the subsequent kidnappings. Ironically, those two men are still not free despite their employer's acquiescence (with GOJ support) to the kidnappers' demands.

[1](#)4. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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HALE